

TESTIMONY OF THE DC BASEBALL ASSOCIATION AND DC BASEBALL.ORG

DECEMBER 13, 2005

BEFORE THE D.C. COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

REGARDING A HEARING ON THE DC BASEBALL STADIUM LEASE

Chairman Ambrose and Members of the DC Committee on Economic Development  
Thank you for the opportunity to present my Testimony in support of the DC Baseball Stadium Lease Agreement with Major League Baseball.

My Name is Matthew Cary and I have been a resident of the District of Columbia for 34 years. I have lived in Ward 1 for 8 years and previously lived in Wards 2, 3, and 6. I am testifying today as President of the DC Baseball Association which is a 501(c)4 Non-Profit Organization whose Purpose is to organize, convene, and conduct programs and activities that promote Major League Baseball in the District of Columbia and support organized educational and athletic community programs and facilities in all wards of the city. I am also on the Board of DC Baseball.Org which provides financial assistance and conducts clinics for DC youth 13 thru 18 years of age in Middle and High Schools in the city. I also serve on the Board of Directors of PlayBall DC and the Mens Senior and Adult Baseball League of the Washington DC Metro Area.

As I have previously testified, I have been active in trying to convince Major League Baseball to expand or relocate a Team to Washington, D.C. since 1990. I have worked closely with 3 potential ownership groups on the issues of Stadium Site location, and Ballpark Financing as they relate to successful formulas used by Major League Baseball to determine the siting and financing of new ballparks across the nation. The efforts of Mayor Williams, his staff and the DC Sports and Entertainment Commission to bring a Major League Team to DC after 34 years without one and to meet the deadlines of renovating RFK Stadium as a temporary site to play baseball have been exceptional. I would like to thank them for their hard work and to also thank the DC City Council for requesting alternative private financing proposals to reduce the tax burden on District businesses and reduce the city's bond obligation.

My purpose in testifying before this Committee is to focus the Council's attention on the long range economic development implications of approving the new renegotiated lease with the City and Major League Baseball. Mayor Williams plan for revitalizing Southeast involves more than a Ballpark. He foresees new hotels, restaurants, apartments and residential housing as well as the expansion of the Navy Yard. The Mayor sees the Team and its new Ballpark as the centerpiece of an urban rejuvenation that dwarfs the impact of a mere sports team. He only promised baseball a BallPark because he thought Washington would eventually get back far more in return. There is already massive construction on South Capitol Street where, a year ago, there was almost nothing except industrial decay.

Eight years ago the Council doubted the feasibility of the MCI Center. Since that time over 20 million people have visited the Sports and Entertainment venue. Surrounded by a new movie theatre complex, bowling alley, condominiums, restaurants and retail, the MCI Center sparked a redevelopment effort to the tune of \$5.3 billion. Within a span of eight years, the MCI Center has benefited DC economically in several capacities:

- a) It has generated \$61 million in taxes for DC;
- b) Attracted over \$5.3 billion in new development including hotels, restaurants, businesses, condominiums, apartments and retail in the downtown area;
- c) Increased the use of the Metro rail system by 11.7 million riders with an estimated 60% of patrons using the rail system for attending events at the arena.

With all of these positive statistics one would think the vote by the DC Council to build the MCI Center would have been 13-0, but the vote barely passed with a 7-5 margin. The same thing was true for the highly successful Convention Center which recorded an 8-5 vote.

A Baseball Park at the South Capitol Street site will generate a \$400 million dollar Community Benefits Package providing, \$125 million for public school modernization, \$45 million for public libraries, \$5 million for school-based athletics and \$50 million for economic development projects in Wards 6, 7, and 8. By supporting this Project like the two before it, the Council would bring far more tax dollars into the city than it would cost city businesses to build. By investing in these kinds of projects, the city can then use the tax influx created by the projects and the resulting ancillary development to directly help our residents.

If the DC Council forces Major League Baseball to move to the RFK Site or worse to leave the city totally, all of these community benefits will disappear along with our Washington Nationals Baseball Team for good. MLB has understood since 1990, when it looked at the RFK site that it was not suitable to achieve the purposes of success as other project sites in cities where new BallParks have been built. The potential for the RFK site to generate ancillary development of hotels, restaurants, commercial and retail businesses within a 5 to 10 year range is extremely unlikely. The city would have to acquire federal land and resolve environmental issues before any urban redevelopment can occur.

The return of Major League Baseball to Washington has begun to benefit the entire DC community and our neighbors in Northern Virginia and Maryland. The Revenue generated by this venture can be used to improve baseball and softball fields and programs at the High School and summer youth levels in all 8 Wards of the city. It will lead to the funding of clinics and the development of suitable coaches for youth baseball and women's fast pitch softball.

Chairman Ambrose, Thank you for your support of Baseball and I urge you and your fellow Council Members to approve the BallPark Lease agreement and move the city forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with this important project. Again, on behalf of the DC

Baseball Association and DC Baseball.Org, I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this important issue and will be glad to answer any questions you may have.